

Summary of “Nobel: Már Nincs Meglepetés” in the Hungarian weekly *Élet és Irodalom* of November 4, 2016 by István Dobozi

In his polemic op-ed "Nobel Prize: No Surprises Anymore" Coalition member István Dobozi takes issue with those who were shocked by the award of the 2016 literary Nobel Prize to the legendary American pop singer Bob Dylan. The author claims that in Stockholm the door has long been open before such controversial, politically colored awards. He cites, for example, the award of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize to Barack Obama who was in office as president of the United States for less than ten months when he received the distinction based *not* on results on the ground, but on his peace *promise*. The author asks: Would the Nobel Commission still award the prize to Mr. Obama based on his actual foreign policy achievements in the past eight years, knowing that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have not been completed, Guantanamo has not been shut down, Libya was attacked, the drone war has been widely escalated, causing thousands of innocent civilian lives as "collateral damage"?

Even in hard sciences (physics, chemistry, etc.), the Nobel awards are often criticized in professional circles. But in semi-hard sciences such as economics and particularly in soft areas like the literature and international relations ("peace") the Nobel Commission is neither unwilling nor capable of disregarding the *zeitgeist* and the "magnetic field" of *aktual politik*. He cites, for example, the award of the 2008 Nobel Prize in Economics to Paul Krugman who -- based on widespread views among economists -- would not have received the prize without becoming in *The New Times* the most ferocious critic of the internationally unpopular Bush administration. If Yasser Arafat and Yitzak Rabin were eligible for the Peace Prize, who cannot receive it in the future? If, like last year, the literature Nobel Prize was given to an author -- Belorussian Svetlana Aleksiyevich -- for her interview-based, politically heavily charged "factbooks," who cannot receive this prize going forward?

The author concludes that these "soft" prizes should not surprise us any more. They should always be seen in the context of the *zeitgeist* and *aktual politik*. Hence, they will always be beset by much criticism and controversy. We just have to live with this reality.